

# Sherlock Holmes and Numismatics

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By Bruce Smith



# Who Was sherlock Holmes?

4 novels and 56 stories by A. Conan Doyle - published from 1887 - 1927  
(most set 1880 - 1914) - most narrated by Dr. John Watson

Dr. Joseph Bell - the real Sherlock?

over 25,000 stage adaptations, films, television productions and publications featuring the detective, and *Guinness World Records* lists him as the most portrayed human literary character in film and television history  
mail sent to 221B Baker Street was answered



# How Popular Is Holmes?

## “The Final Problem” 1893

The public reaction to the death was unlike anything previously seen for fictional events. More than 20,000 Strand readers cancelled their subscriptions, outraged by Holmes' premature demise.

The magazine barely survived. Its staff referred to Holmes' death as “the dreadful event”.

## “The Adventure of the Empty House” 1903



# Holmes Societies

<https://www.sherlockian.net/celebrating/locations/>

The Fourth Garrideb <https://fourthgarrideb.com/>

## Holmes on Coins

Royal Mint 50p <https://www.royalmint.com/our-coins/events/sherlock-holmes/>

1994 Gibraltar Return of Sherlock Holmes Commemorative Crowns:  
<https://en.numista.com/catalogue/pieces47553.html>

## Who really was Sherlock Holmes?

Dr. Watson's summary list of Sherlock Holmes's strengths and weaknesses:

“1. Knowledge of Literature: Nil.

2. Knowledge of Philosophy: Nil.

3. Knowledge of Astronomy: Nil.

4. Knowledge of Politics: Feeble.

5. Knowledge of Botany: Variable. Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally. Knows nothing of practical gardening.

6. Knowledge of Geology: Practical but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them.

## The list continued:

7. Knowledge of Chemistry: Profound.
8. Knowledge of Anatomy: Accurate but unsystematic.
9. Knowledge of Sensational Literature: Immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.
10. Plays the violin well.
11. Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.
12. Has a good practical knowledge of British law.”

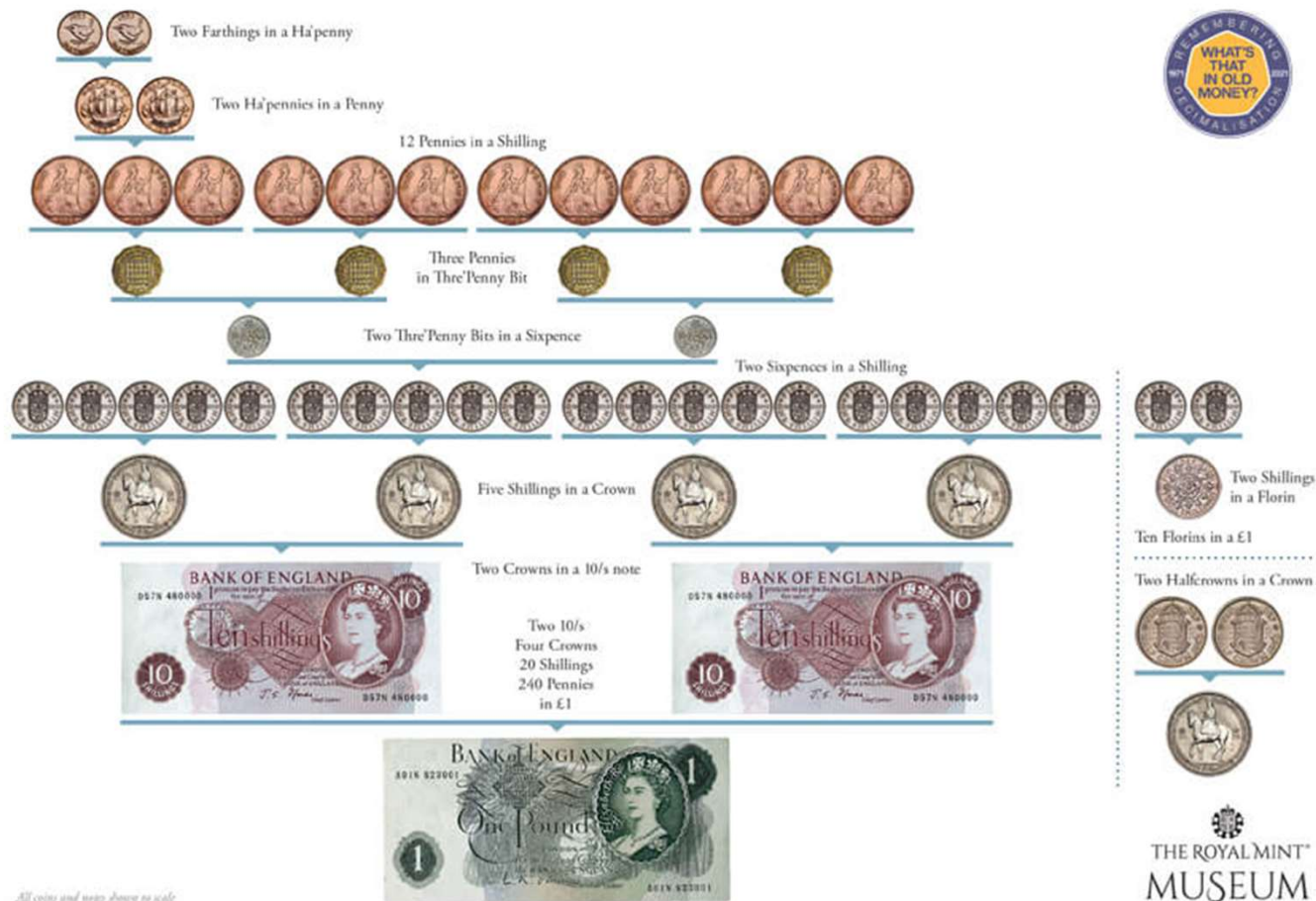
## Holmes's own assessment:

"Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I'm a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of Government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They lay all the evidence before me, and I am generally able, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, to set them straight. There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger ends, it is odd if you can't unravel the thousand and first."

## Coins and Numismatics in the Canon

- 1. references to circulating British coins
- 1. coins/money as important plot element
- 1. the tale of a numismatist

# Pre Decimal Coinage: The Pound Sterling



references to circulating British coins:

often as a reward – the Baker Street Irregulars, cabbie in “A Scandal in Bohemia”

sometimes as a wager – “The Blue Carbuncle”

or as a bit of madness – “The Adventure of the Dying Detective”

**“Now, Watson,” said he. “Have you any change in your pocket?”**

**“Yes.”**

**“Any silver?”**

**“A good deal.”**

**“How many half-crowns?”**

**“I have five.”**

**“Ah, too few! Too few! How very unfortunate, Watson! However, such as they are you can put them in your watch-pocket. And all the rest of your money in your left trouser-pocket. Thank you. It will balance you so much better than this.”**

**money central to the plot:**

“The Red Headed League”

“The Man With the Twisted Lip”

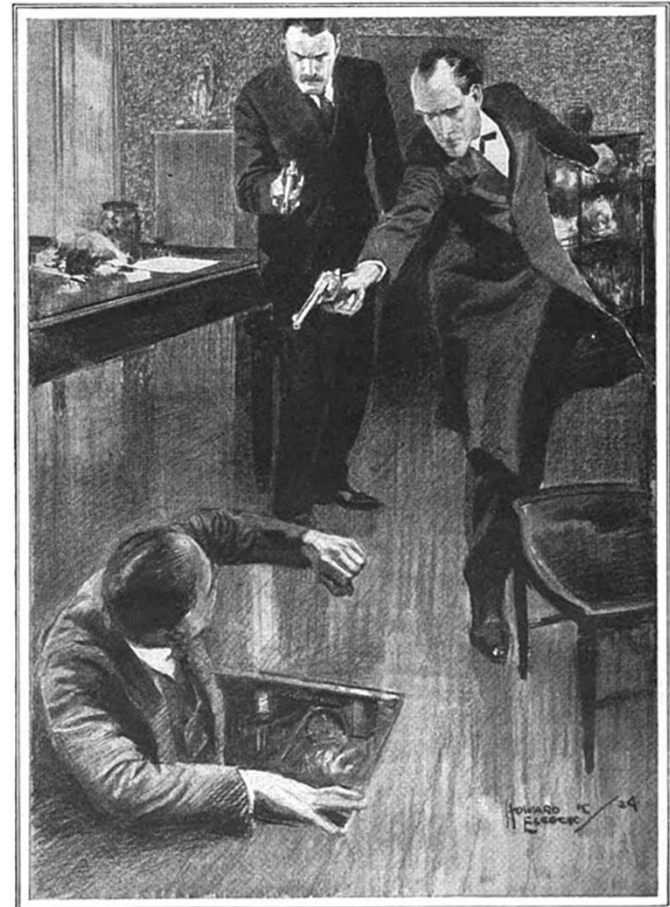


## Numismatics in the Plot:

“The Adventure of the Three Garridebs”



...with counterfeiting too!



Questions?

